

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS (EA OR-030-04-005) Blue Mt. Fence

I have reviewed EA OR-030-04-005 and determined that the proposed action, with mitigating measures, will not have any significant impacts on the human environment. An EIS is not required. My rationale for this finding of no significant impacts is as follows.

The proposed change would not cause permanent negative changes to plant community composition, structure or productivity. No scalping or blading would be allowed to clear vegetation in order to install the temporary fence. The use of a chainsaw would be acceptable for removing individual shrubs during construction and maintenance of the fence and would not threaten the vegetation population or the visual character of the area. Impacts resulting from livestock walking the fence and trampling vegetation, would be localized and reversible. This should only occur on the stretch of fence that begins on Twelve Mile Summit and ends at Blue Mountain Basin Reservoir #2. Once the cattle learn the location of the fence, trailing along the fence should diminish.

Orderly administration of livestock grazing management would be facilitated as a result of the proposed action because the fence will help hold cattle in the desired locations. The fence eliminates mixing of cattle from the two operations, holds each permittee's cattle in their own area of use, allows each permittee to become accountable for their own management, and provides opportunities for deferment or rest within the Blue Mountain Pasture. Livestock rotations and numbers would remain within the bounds of existing grazing permits.

The proposed fence location and design would have impacts consistent with those that have already been analyzed in the SEORMP FEIS. Big game migration corridors would not be unduly disrupted and the design would minimize the potential of for wildlife injury or mortality. Direct harassment impacts to wildlife due to fence construction would be avoided because construction activities would occur after severe winter weather and be of short duration during the onset of most land bird nesting activity.

There could be an increase in raptor predation of sage grouse from the creation of hunting perches, however this potential is expected to be minimal because the fence would not be located in high sage grouse areas, such as near leks (breeding grounds) or wet meadows. Thus, conformance with 2000 Oregon/Washington interim management guidelines for fencing in sage grouse habitat would be attained.

The 2200 feet of temporary fence in the Twelvemile Creek WSA, would have minimal effect because of other pre-existing visual impacts from other nearby range improvements and man made structures. Due to the temporary nature of fences and the negligible cumulative effects it would have on the Twelvemile WSA's suitability for wilderness designation, the proposed fence should be capable of meeting non-impairment standards for WSAs, under the BLM's Interim Management Policy for Lands Under Wilderness Review (IMP). The fence will be reviewed again through the Trout Creek GMA evaluation and subsequent NEPA before it may be made permanent. A review of

the impacts from the fence at that time will allow for immediate removal if needed or desired at that time.

Potential adverse impacts related to soils, water resources, air quality, noxious weeds, recreation, visual resources, and cultural resources are expected to be short term or have minimal effects.

No impacts were identified that would significantly affect any aspect of the human environment provided that mitigating measures are followed.

Prior to construction of the temporary fence, the Resource Area Botanist will conduct a field search to ensure that actions authorized by the BLM would not contribute to the need for listing a plant species under ESA. The Resource Area Archeologist will also conduct a field search and Class III cultural resource inventory prior to construction to determine if cultural resources are present along the fence route. If either the Botanist or the Archeologist finds any special status plants or important artifacts, the location of the fence would be modified to avoid negative impacts to these resources and values. The final location of the proposed fence may therefore be adjusted slightly to avoid conflicts with cultural or botanical resources.

No off road travel within the WSA would be allowed to construct the fence. Delivery of all materials within the WSA would be packed by hand or by horse if the materials need to be delivered off the existing roads. Fencing materials chosen for the fence would mitigate any visual intrusions WSAs.

I have determined that the proposed project is in conformance with the Southeast Oregon RMP plan.

s/Jerry Taylor, Jordan Resource Area Field Manager

March 22, 2004

Signature of Authorized Official

Date